2: Musters T-5 (1869-1870)1873
SH5 Tehuelche SH5



The child, shortly after birth, is smeared over with damp gypsum. The mothers are able to travel on horseback the same or certainly the subsequent day, with the infant carried in a wicker cradle, and most tenderly cared for by both parents.

To every child in its infancy horses and gear are allotted, which are considered thenceforth as the personal property of the boy or girl, and cannot be resumed or disposed of by the parents. No ceremonial attends the naming a child, nor, as far as I could see, is there any fixed time for doing so. The names most commonly used are taken, I think, from places—from the place of birth. Patronymics or hereditary names—except in rare instances, which appeared to be imitations of Spanish usage—are unknown, but nicknames are universal, and parents are frequently known by the name of a child, which usurps the place of their own.

The boys soon learn the use of the weapons, and both boys and girls ride almost before they can walk: the sons rarely accompany the father to the chase before ten or twelve years of age, and do not join in fights till they are about sixteen years old, but there is no fixed period and no ceremonial to mark their admission to the state of manhood. The attainment of puberty by the girls is celebrated as described in page 80. From the age of nine or ten they are accustomed to help in household duties and manufactures, and about sixteen are eligible for the married life, though they often remain for several years spinsters. Marriages are always those of inclination, and if the damsel does not like the suitor for her hand, her parents never force her to comply with their wishes, although the match may be an advantageous one.

The usual custom is for the bridegroom, after he has secured the consent of his damsel, to send either a brother or an intimate friend to the parents, offering so many mares, horses, or silver ornaments for the bride. If the parents consider the match desirable, as soon after as circumstances will permit, the bridegroom, dressed in his best, and mounted